



# ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

July 2003

## Waste Management Board Recognizes AB&I for Outstanding Achievements

The governing body in California charged with monitoring and enforcing waste-related environmental standards has identified AB&I as a WRAP (Waste Reduction Award Program) Award recipient in each of the past three years. Only those manufacturers and other companies demonstrating dramatic reductions in waste generation qualify for this award.

"We won the award in 2000, 2001, and 2002," says AB&I environmental engineer, Mike Olvera. "We're hoping to win the award again this year," says Olvera, "but we won't find out for sure until October."

Sponsored by the California Integrated Waste Management Board, this award is granted to companies who develop innovative programs to reduce waste, reuse resources where possible, and recycle.

"The California business sector generates about half of the state's trash," says Linda Moulton-Patterson, Waste Board Chairper-



son, "and businesses can have a significant impact on their community's waste reduction goals by taking proactive steps to reduce what they throw away."

Creativity and putting in place a plan that works for each individual business are keys to successful waste reduction efforts. AB&I has spent well over a decade in an aggressive environmental program that includes a very active waste reduction plan.

"We've dramatically reduced waste from all sources," reports Olvera. From a basic anti-littering campaign on the foundry grounds to a highly-sophisticated foundry dust collection system that recycles gathered material back into the melting furnace for disposal, AB&I

has reduced waste in the air, water and land each year since the program's inception.

Statewide, more than 42% of solid waste produced by business is diverted away from

disposal. "Our record at AB&I is better than that," says AB&I's vice president, Kip Wixson. "We've invested millions over the years to clean up our processes, and in so doing have helped clean our environment. We're pleased to be recognized by the state for our efforts, and plan to continue our program of meeting ever-improving environmental standards."

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## Perspective

# Are Daily Distractions Killing Your Company's Profitability?

*If this little scenario sounds familiar (and it will), maybe it's time to think about time management.*

A little blurb crossed my desk recently. Although it's not about business, it is about time, and as we all learned from Einstein, Time Equals Money, so there must be some connection in there someplace. Anyway, see if you recognize any of yourself in this:

*I decided to wash my car. As I started toward the garage, I spotted the mail on the hall table. I should go through the mail before I wash the car, so I lay the car keys on the table, put the junk mail in the trash can under the table, and notice that the trash can is full. I put the mail back on the table and take out the trash. Since I'm going to be near the mailbox when I take out the trash, I might as well pay the bills first. I see my checkbook on the table, but there is only one check left in it. My extra checks are in my desk in the study, so I go to my desk where I find the bottle of juice that I had been drinking the day before. I'm going to look for my checks, but first I have to push the juice aside so that I don't accidentally knock it over. But the juice is getting warm, and should be put back in the refrigerator to keep it cold. Heading to the kitchen with the juice, I notice a vase of flowers on the counter that needs to be watered. I set the juice down on the counter, and find my reading glasses, for which I've been searching all morning. I had better put them back in my desk, but first I need to water the flowers. I put the glasses back down on the counter, fill a container with water, and suddenly spot the TV remote. Someone left it on the kitchen table. Tonight, when we sit down to watch TV, we'll be looking for that remote, but nobody will remember that it's on the kitchen table, so I should put it back in the den where it belongs, but first I'll water the flowers. I splash some water on the flowers, but most of it spills on the floor. So I put the remote back down on the table, and get some towels to wipe up the spill. Then I head down the hall trying to remember what I had been planning to do.*

*At the end of the day, the car isn't washed, the bills aren't paid, there is a warm bottle of juice sitting on the counter, the flowers aren't watered, there is still only one check in my checkbook, I can't*

*find the remote, I can't find my glasses, and I don't remember what I did with those car keys.*

*I'm trying to figure out why nothing got done today. It's quite baffling, because I know that I was busy all day, and I'm really tired.*

Ever have one of those days? Probably not just one, right? The truth is, we all have those days, and not just at home. It really doesn't matter if the car gets washed, but if our days at work look like this day at home, serious problems can result.

Time management people have some helpful hints to avoid these days at work. These "rules" are all pretty basic and common sensical, but we all ignore them all the time. Here's a few I can think of right off the top of my head. Maybe you have some more ideas about good time management you can share with us. We'll publish the better ones in an upcoming issue of Items:

1. Keep a written daily planner. Write down the 2-10 most important things that must happen that day. Refer back to it often. Are you on track at 10am? Noon? 3pm?

2. Set time parameters for each task. I think it's Wixson's Law that work expands to fit the time allotted to it. To be more efficient, allot less time. Give yourself enough time to get the job done, but no more.

3. Delegate as much as possible. Figure out what your hourly pay is. That's right, just divide your salary by the number of hours each month you work. That's your hourly pay. If the task you're doing can be done by somebody at a lower pay scale, delegate it to them and check in on them from time to time to see how things are going. It doesn't make sense for a \$40-\$60 an hour exec to spend 15 minutes putting a quarter's worth of staples into an empty stapler.

4. Have a "phone free zone" during the busiest times. It's OK to just be unavailable sometimes. Phones can be terrible distractors, and most of the time the urgent need by the person on the other end can be handled just as well in 30 minutes or an hour. Keep focused.

5. Develop policies and procedures. If you're having to creatively solve every little customer problem that comes up, you're working too hard. Most problems or needs can be addressed with a stated policy or a set procedure. It not only eases your burden, but makes the customer feel better that you have a pre-set plan for dealing with his needs.

6. Take regular stress breaks. A quick walk around the plant or a potty break can interrupt the stress cycle that comes from the constant barrage that is daily business. A fresh mind is a creative mind, and can often solve problems faster and more effectively than is possible with a tired brain.

7. Avoid meetings. If there are more than three people involved in any decision or project, rethink the decision or project. Remember Wixson's Law. Meetings are time eaters. If you must have them, set a time limit for the meeting. Have a written agenda, and put a straightjacket on the guy who keeps wandering off topic. The best meetings take place in the hallway or standing at the urinal.

There are lots of other ideas for making better use of time at work. Fax yours to me at 510/632-8035. Maybe I'll write a book from what we gather, and retire to the South of France. But first, I have to find those car keys. Where's the remote? Is that the phone ringing?

John Stockton recently retired from the NBA, with little fanfare and not much notice. In fact, if you hadn't followed his career, you may not even know that he was voted one of the 50 top NBA players of all time, that he was the league's all-time leader in assists AND steals (leading the NBA in assists for NINE STRAIGHT YEARS!), scored over 18,000 points, played in every game in 17 of his 19 seasons, and has played in more games than any guard in NBA history. His team made the playoffs EVERY season he played, and he tied with Magic Johnson for the most assists in a Playoff Game.

To put it into perspective, to break Stockton's record, a player coming into the NBA would have to average 10 assists per game and play in every game for **19 years**.

When he retired, he made a simple little speech and walked away a winner. No splash, no hoopla, just pure professional.



## Recent Study Sounds Alarm Bell for American Manufacturing Base

A report in the manufacturing trade press by Joel Popkin and Company paints an ever-dimming picture of the American factory sector, and suggests strongly that a decline in this important part of our economy can spell big trouble for our future as a nation.

In their report, "Securing America's Future: the Case for a Strong Manufacturing Base," Popkin's company reports that competition from foreign manufacturers has already changed the way American factories operate and do business. For example, investment in R&D, undertaken by manufacturers in the past, has slowed as foreign competition has stiffened. Where R&D in the past has paid big dividends in new products and high-paying jobs, the slowdown in R&D investment has reversed that trend, in some cases quite dramatically.

The Popkin report urges all Americans to be mindful of the role American manufacturing has played in the development of the world's largest economy. For instance, Popkin reminds us that for every dollar of final demand for manufactured goods in the US, an additional \$0.67 is generated in related products, and an additional \$0.76 is produced in the non-manufacturing sector.

Manufacturing also invents the future, with spillover from manufacturing R&D benefitting other manufacturers as well as non-manufacturing businesses. Additionally, productivity in the manufacturing sector has grown faster than in other parts of the economy. These gains enable Americans to do more with less, increasing our international competitiveness and facilitating better wages for all employees.

Manufacturing wages have historically been higher than wages in the economy as a whole, creating a wellspring of purchasing power that gets spread throughout the economy.

Manufacturing businesses pay 30-34% of all taxes to state and local governments.

So what trends does the Popkin report see developing that could adversely affect our economy and standard of living?

For starters, the loss of jobs in the factory sector has been dramatic and unrelenting. More than 2.3 million high-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost since July 2000. Many of these jobs have simply been shipped overseas to lower-cost countries or disintegrated as companies closed for good. Since the last recession officially ended in December 2001, there has been essentially no growth in the sector, creating the weakest manufacturing environment since 1919.

Another trend Popkin warns about is the loss of export potential. The strong dollar and weak manufacturing climate have combined to increase import product sales to record highs. As American producers for many goods simply capitulate to foreign competitors, the potential for future exports decreases as capital is directed into other channels.

The deceleration of R&D investment is also troubling to the Popkin group. From 2000 to 2002, R&D investment growth was only half what it had averaged in the previous decade. R&D often spurs new product introductions and the development

of new technologies that foster purchasing demand. Less R&D could significantly impact this important part of American GDP.

The decline of apprenticeship and other programs, as well as the de-emphasis of practical skills training in secondary schools, has led to a loss of skilled workers that could be difficult to overcome. This deficit in the skilled workforce could restrain any recovery efforts and put an additional drag on the potential for future export activity.

A central factor in the decline of American manufacturing vis-a-vis foreign competitors is the dramatically rising costs that greet companies doing business in the U.S. Healthcare cost, environmental cleanup, worker's comp, litigation exposure and government regulation all join forces to make America one expensive place to do business. As a result, many manufacturers have either closed down or moved their production to other countries where the costs are not as high.

Popkin reminds us that we need American manufacturing to be strong if we are to be strong as a nation and enjoy a good standard of living for ourselves and our children.

"If the U.S. manufacturing base continues to shrink at its present rate and the critical mass is lost," says Popkin, "the manufacturing innovation process will shift to other global centers. Once that happens, a decline in U.S. living standards in the future is virtually assured."

### Seven Things You Should Never Say If You Want to Get Ahead in Sales

The quickest way to achieve success is to eliminate negatives. Here are a few things research has found that star performers strive to avoid:

**1. "They didn't get back to me."** Never take the passive approach and wait for somebody to do something. Find a way to take the initiative.

**2. "I thought someone else was taking care of that."** Yeah, right. Excuses dull customer confidence. Keep things moving. Follow up.

**3. "No one ever told me."** Keep yourself in the loop by being a key player. Need info? Dig it up yourself. Act like the boss.

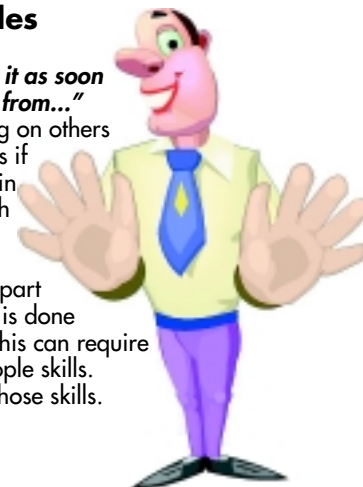
**4. "I didn't have time."** What you're really saying is, I couldn't handle the job.

**5. "But it isn't due until..."** Last minute, panicked work is for amateurs, and is usually second rate at best. Be a pro.

**6. "But they said it would be done on time."** Anticipate problems. Take steps to head them off. Be a leader.

**7. "I'll do it as soon as I get it from..."**

Depending on others only works if you keep in close touch with them and make sure their part of the job is done on time. This can require stellar people skills. Sharpen those skills.





## CAL-OSHA Cracking Down on Accident Reporting

Customers are reminded that legislation passed in 2002 raises the fine for employers' failure to report a workplace accident in a "timely manner" from \$500 to \$5,000, as of January 1, 2003. The new law also stipulates that a manager who fails to report a workplace death can be fined up to \$15,000 and receive up to a year in jail. Additionally, the company who fails to report a death can be fined up to \$150,000.

CAL-OSHA reports that the need for this change was based on a dramatic increase in violations of the reporting requirements between 1997-2002. Customers are encouraged to protect themselves by having an effective safety plan, training employees for their specific jobs, and generally being proactive with regard to safety issues.

**Quote of the day... "I'd kill for the Nobel Peace Prize."**

Steven Wright

### Just for Fun...

#### An Interview with the President of Your HMO...

*The following are excerpts from an interview with Dewey Cheatum, president and CEO of your HMO. We're sure you'll find it comforting...*

Q. Mr. Cheatum, just what do the letters 'HMO' stand for?

A. This is actually a variation of the phrase, "Hey Moe!" Its roots go back to a concept pioneered by Moe of the Three Stooges, who discovered in 1961 that a patient could be made to forget the pain in his foot if he was poked hard enough in the eyes.

Q. I just joined your HMO. How difficult will it be to choose the doctor I want?

A. Just slightly more difficult than choosing your parents. Our company will provide you with a book listing all the doctors in our plan. These doctors basically fall into two categories - those who are no longer accepting new patients, and those who will see you, but are no longer participating in our plan. But don't worry, we search the four corners of the earth to find doctors eager to sign up with us. You may have to drive four hours to see your doctor, but almost all of them have real medical degrees, and some even come from outside the Third World.

Q. When I asked for a referral to a specialist, my plan doctor told me he could do the heart transplant right in his office. Is he correct?

A. Hard to say, but since it's only \$15 for the copayment, it couldn't hurt to try.

Q. Can I get coverage for my pre-existing conditions?

A. Of course, as long as they don't require any treatment.

Q. What happens if I want to try alternative forms of medicine?

A. Then you'll need to find alternative forms of payment.

Q. My pharmacy plan only covers generic drugs, but I need name brand. I tried the generics, but they gave me a stomach ache. What should I do?

A. Poke yourself in the eye.

#### A Few Great Rules to Live By...

Rule 1: When choking on an ice cube, don't panic. Simply pour boiling water down your throat and, presto!, the blockage is almost immediately removed.

Rule 2: If you're clumsy in the kitchen, avoid cutting yourself while slicing vegetables by getting your spouse to hold them while you chop away.

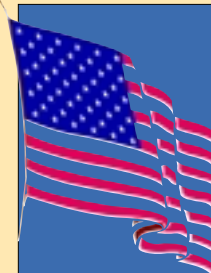
Rule 3: A mouse trap mounted on top of your alarm clock will almost certainly cure you of the tendency to hit the snooze button and thereby oversleep.

Rule 4: If you have a bad cough, take a powerful laxative. Your instant fear of coughing will solve the problem.

Rule 5: You only need two tools: WD-40 and duct tape. If it moves and shouldn't, use the duct tape. If it should move but doesn't, use the WD-40.

Rule 6: Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.

Rule 7: Be good to your family and friends; you never know who will pick your rest home.



#### Tips for Displaying the Flag

The American flag should...

...never touch the ground

...be displayed only in good weather

...be displayed from sunrise to sunset

...be illuminated if displayed after dark.